# SOME
# CUSTOMS
## CONSIDER'D,

Whether Prejudicial to the

## *Health of this CITY;*

And if they are,

## Whether we may not hope to have them Reformed.

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*It is manifestly much more adviseable to keep off the Invasion of a Pestilence, than to stand its violent and fatal Shocks; and Self-Preservation, as well as the Example of other wise People, admonishes us to use all possible Endeavours to keep it from us, and guard ourselves against it, while at a Distance.*

*Dr.* Hodges's *Loimologia*, p. 205.

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*LONDON:*

*Printed for* EMAN. MATTHEWS, *at the* Bible, *in* Pater-noster-row M.DCC.XXI.

(Price Three-Pence.)

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SOME

# CUSTOMS

CONSIDER'D,

## *Whether prejudicial to the Health of this* CITY.

THE dreadful Spread the *Plague* has for ſome time made in *France*, has juſtly alarm'd all theſe Parts of the World, to ſtand upon their guard, and to prevent, as far as poſſiby they can, the bringing that Calamity amongſt them, by any correſponding with the infected Places.

THIS Precaution is as neceſſary for *England*, as any other part of *Europe*: for by that clandeſtine Trade which ſome ill Perſons carry on in the *Mediterranean*, we ſeem as near the Danger of the Infection, as any of thoſe Countries that lie betwixt them and us, upon the Coaſt and Continent.

THE Conſideration of our Danger has ſo far alarm'd us, that proper Care has been taken both in a Religious way, *viz.* by Faſting and Prayer; and in a Political way, by enjoining the keeping Quarentines, and giving renewed Orders for cleaning of our Streets.

* Dr. *Mead's* Dedication of his Diſcourſe to the honourable *James Craggs* Eſq; late Secretary of State.

P. 20,

* AND at the Signification of the Pleaſure of the Lords-Juſtices in His Majeſty's Abſence, Dr. *Mead* has given Advices for the Publick Security, in his Diſcourſe of Peſtilential Contagion, and the Methods to be uſed to prevent it; and there he tells us, That he does not look on the Plague to be a Native here, but the Growth of the Eaſtern

Eaſtern and Southern Parts of the World, and tranſmitted from thence into theſe colder Climates by way of Commerce ; and therefore Contagions from Abroad, brought over to us, have prov'd leſs malignant here, by our Air not being diſpoſed to receive ſuch Impreſſions. P. 5. P. 6.

YET, he ſays, there is in every Air a greater Diſpoſition to receive Infection at one time than at another ; and that we found it ſo in the great Calamity, when the Plague raged with ſo much Fury, in *London*, in the Year 1665.

NOW what has been, may be ; and the whole Nation has expreſs'd their Apprehenſion of the Greatneſs of our preſent Danger, in the late Day of Humiliation, which was ſo ſolemnly and univerſally obſerved, as has had no Parallel in our Day.

MAY the ſame Religious, Political, and Civil Methods for our Preſervation

vation be continued, with the utmoſt Care and Diligence; and may the Bleſſing of Heaven (without which all the reſt can avail us nothing) make all ſucceſsful, to the preſerving of us free from that awful Judgment.

WE have many Advantages in this City above others, that do in great meaſure contribute as Means to the Health of it: As a good Air and Soil, and one of the nobleſt Rivers in the World, which runs between the City and Suburbs, from one end of the Town to the other; which River by the Strength of its Current, and the Flux and Reflux of the Sea, carries away prodigious Quantities of the Filth of the Town, that are emptied into it through the Common-Shores, which are waſhed by a deal of the waſte Water of the new River, that paſſeth through them.

THESE are Advantages for the keeping the City clean and healthful; but yet there are ſome Things that de-

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ſerve to be inſpected, and ſeem to require, that Care ſhould be taken leſt they prove prejudicial to us.

AMONGST all the Books and Papers written of late about the Plague, our Danger of it, and Preſervatives againſt it; there is no mention made of what is here ſuggeſted we may be endanger'd by. That others have ſaid nothing of it, muſt proceed either from their having been Strangers to the Matter of Fact, or that they had overlook'd it, or that they thought it not worthy of their notice.

BUT of what Importance it is, is here referr'd to all to judge, eſpecially to thoſe who are beſt able effectually to remove, what may in that Caſe endanger us.

IT is well known, that ſeveral Out-Pariſhes of this City and Liberties are very much ſtraiten'd for Room to bury their Dead; and that to remedy in part that Inconvenience, they dig in their

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Church-yards, or other annexed Burial-Places, large Holes or Pits, in which they put many of the Bodies of thoſe, whoſe Friends are not able to pay for better Graves; and then thoſe Pits or Holes (called the Poor's Holes) once opened, are not cover'd, till fill'd with ſuch dead Bodies: Thus it is in St. *Martin's*, St. *James's*, and St. *Giles's in the Fields*, and other Places.

NASTINESS is a great Source of Infection, and the Air being corrupted by noiſome Smells, a Peſtilential Venom may conſequently receive additional Strength by ſuch Means. The worſt of Stenches are thoſe that ariſe from dead Bodies; and of them, thoſe from Human Bodies are the worſt of all. The Stench of a mortified Limb upon a Body yet living, or any cancer'd Part of ſuch a Body, is very offenſive: What then muſt the Stench of ſo many Human Corpſes be? Some of which, perhaps, died of very bad and malignant Diſeaſes, and it may be, were corrupted before they were

were put into thoſe Holes; and then lie ſo long there corrupting uncover'd.

Dr. *Quincy*, in his Eſſay of the dif- P. 234.
ferent Cauſes of Peſtilential Diſeaſes, annexed to Dr. *Hodges*'s Account of the Plague of *London*, ſays, That one Cauſe of the Plague is charg'd upon the Steams and Exhalations that ariſe from putrefying Bodies; and that it has been often obſerved, that the Plague has ſoon appear'd after great Slaughter of Men in Battle; and thoſe being uſually in Summer, the Heats of thoſe Seaſons do more diſpoſe to Putrefactions than others.

HE relates alſo a Paſſage out of *Ambroſe Paris*, of a Plague that laid almoſt a whole Country waſte, which had its Riſe from the Stench of a great many Human Carcaſes that were thrown into one Pit, and left rotting there uncover'd.

NOW then, though we are happy in our Climate, and our Air be not

ſo much diſpoſed to receive and entertain Infection, as warmer Climates are; and ſo the Force of any Infection brought amongſt us, may be abated, and that Contagion leſſened: yet if we ſhould be ſo unhappy, as to have Infection brought amongſt us, how might the Air from the Stench and Putrefaction of ſo many dead Bodies as lie rotting in thoſe Holes or Pits uncover'd, be diſpoſed to receive that Infection, and alſo heighten, ſtrengthen, and aggravate that Contagion?

HOW noiſome the Stench is, that ariſes from theſe Holes ſo ſtow'd with dead Bodies, eſpecially in ſultry Seaſons, and after Rain; one may appeal to all who approach them, eſpecially to thoſe who have had the ſorrowful Occaſion to ſtand over them, or near them, whilſt the Bodies of any of their Relations or Friends were committed to thoſe dreadful Places.

THERE is ſomething ſo barbarous and ſhocking to Human Nature

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in this Cuſtom, that one would wonder how it ever came to be taken up at the firſt, and much more that it ſhould be ſo long continued. The treating of thoſe Bodies in ſuch a different way from all the reſt that lie in thoſe Burying-Places, looks like a branding and ſtigmatizing of them with Ignominy and Diſgrace at their Deaths, for ſome Crimes they had been guilty of in their Lives; and as tho they had been Sinners and Criminals above all the reſt of the Pariſh: which Treatment of them, is as grievous and cutting to their ſurviving Relations, as their very Death itſelf.

WHEREAS in Reality there is no other Reaſon for their being thus diſtinguiſhed from others in their Burials, but that they died poor, tho perhaps part of their Time they lived plentifully, and ſerved ſeveral Pariſh-Offices reputably, and to Satisfaction.

ARE Scavengers obliged by their Office, and the renewed Orders in their

cleanſing the Streets, to remove the Carcaſes of dead Dogs, Cats, and other Vermine; and ſhall the dead Bodies of Men and Women, and our Fellow-Chriſtians, lie ſo long uncovered? And this, if not under the pretended Orders and Regulations of Pariſhes and their Officers, yet at leaſt by their Connivance.

HOW meanly will Perſons be apt to think of that Chriſtian Burial that is given them, if, for ſo long a time after, they remain without that Burial, which Heathens would not deny them? We charge it upon Papiſts as a very barbarous Thing, that they will not ſuffer the Proteſtants that die amongſt them to have any Burials; and is it not a ſhame, that Proteſtants, in a Proteſtant Nation, ſhould for ſo long a time be hinder'd and deny'd a compleat Burial?

IF this Cuſtom of making theſe Holes, and thus uſing of them after the manner we have heard, has been taken

taken up and continued, becauſe of the want of room in populous Pariſhes, conveniently to bury their Dead: Why then do not ſuch Pariſhes enlarge thoſe Burying-Places they have, if that can be done? Or if not, if that cannot be done, why do they not purchaſe more Ground, for additional Burying-Places, to thoſe they have already? as ſome Pariſhes have done.

PERHAPS ſome will ſay, That if the Poor, whoſe Burials there are none to pay for, were to be laid in diſtinct and ſeparate Graves, they would then take up that Ground which others would pay for, and ſo hinder ſome Perſons of their Dues. Now in theſe large and populous Pariſhes we are ſpeaking of, the Profits ariſing from the many Funerals of the Rich, may be ſuppoſed to be ſo great, that the Burial of the indigent Poor, might be given them without damage to any: But eſpecially if new Burying-Grounds were provided, where the Rich might be accommodated, they would

would give any Rates, rather than be buried in crowded Church-yards.

AND till ſuch Accommodations could be had, if Graves were to be made ſo deep, as that the next Courſe of Corpſes were to be buried over the other; a Church-yard of a narrow Compaſs would be equivalent in its uſe, to one twice as large: and by this means might be prevented the breaking open Graves and dead Bodies, ſo ſoon as to endanger the Living; as is too often done.

BUT if all that has been ſaid, cannot perſuade the Heads and leading Perſons in Pariſhes to be willing to have the uſe of thoſe Holes or Pits to ceaſe, for the Poor's ſake; I hope they will, upon due Conſideration, be prevailed upon to conſent to it, and promote it for their own ſakes, and their Families, and for the common Safety and Health of this City.

BESIDES what has been offer'd already to Conſideration, which ſo much concerns the Health of this City, there is another thing that deſerves ſome Examination, *viz.* Whether the Air and Health of this City may not ſuffer ſome prejudice from the Steams that may iſſue from the many Vaults where ſo many dead Bodies are lodged, eſpecially thoſe that are under our Churches. Nothing, ſays Dr. *Mead*, approaches ſo near to the firſt Original of Contagion, as Air pent up, loaded with Damps, and corrupted with the Filthineſs that proceeds from Animal Bodies. P. 41.

IT is from an Apprehenſion of Danger from the Steams of thoſe Vaults, when they are to be open'd to bury in them, that it is the Cuſtom to make Fires in them, and to continue them till the time of the intended Funerals.

IT is a ſurprizing Story that Dr.
P. 42. *Mead* tells us from *Cambden*, That at the Black Aſſize at *Oxford*, 1577, the Judges, Gentry, and almoſt all that were preſent, to the number of 300, were kill'd by a poiſonous Steam, that ſome thought broke forth from the Earth: But he ſays, as my Lord *Verulam* more juſtly ſuppoſed, that that Steam was what the Priſoners brought with them out of the Goal into the Court, it being obſerved that they alone were not injured by it.

MAY not the Vaults mentioned, at their Opening, ſend forth noxious Steams? And may not thoſe Perſons imployed in the opening of them, bring that with them which may be prejudicial to others, tho they themſelves may ſuffer no Inconvenience, being accuſtom'd to it in their being ſo often imploy'd amongſt the Dead.

P. 39. Dr. *Mead* ſpeaking of putting a Stop to the Plague when diſcovered, and taking

taking care of the Sick, *&c.* ſays, No manner of Compaſſion and Care ſhou'd be wanting to the Diſeaſed, *&c.* and all Expences ſhould be pay'd by the Publick, and no Charges ought to be thought great, which are counterbalanced by the ſaving a Nation from the greateſt of Calamities. And is not the Argument of as great or greater Force, what ought to be done in all manner of rational Methods, for the preventing that Calamity coming amongſt us? if that be the Will of God. No Charges ought to be thought great, if we may hope to have them counterbalanced with ſuch a Preſervation: And therefore, if the Removal of any of thoſe things that have been mentioned, that we may be in danger from, could not be done without damage to ſome Particulars, it is hoped the Publick will readily bear that Charge which will redound to the Publick Good.

THE whole of this Affair is humbly repreſented and referr'd to the

Honourable Houſe of Commons now aſſembled in Parliament, heartily praying that they will take Cognizance of it, who are the beſt Judges, both of what may endanger us, and what Methods are beſt to be taken for our common Safety and Security.

THE Nation is very ſenſible what Steps they have already taken for our Preſervation from Infection, by the Proviſion made to oblige to ſtrict Obſervations of Quarentines; and every one is thence encouraged to hope, that they will ſtill imploy their Wiſdom, and utmoſt Care, to find out and purſue the beſt Meaſures, and Methods, for the Preſervation of the Health and Happineſs of this City; which, if conſider'd as conſiſting of *London* and *Weſtminſter* together, is the largeſt in *Europe*, and moſt populous: A City which is the Metropolis and Capital of the Nation, in which our Monarchs have their Reſidence, our Parliaments are held, our Courts of Judicature are kept; and

where ſo great a Proportion of the Riches, Trade, and Intereſt of this Kingdom is lodged and managed. It is not to be doubted but that the Repreſentatives of the People of this Kingdom, now aſſembled in Parliament in this Place, will have the Welfare of it at heart.

AND for their Direction, Aſſiſtance, and Succeſs in all the great Affairs that come before them, that regard the Health, Wealth, Happineſs, and Proſperity of this City and Kingdom, they may be aſſured that many hearty Prayers will be continually put up to the God of Heaven for them.

THE ready Concurrence of the Honourable Lord-Mayor and Aldermen of this City, is no to be doubted, who have the whol of the Intereſt of themſelves and Families, as it were, embarked in his ſingle Bottom.

*FINIS.*